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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes some of the major findings of the 1993 Iowa Youth Survey, which examined the attitudes and behaviors of 14,400 Iowa students in grades 6-12 in 72 school districts. It lists the percentage of Iowa youth with various internal and external assets (such as educational aspiration, achievement motivation, self-esteem, and prosocial behavior) and deficits (such as a disruptive school environment, alcohol use, abuse, and poverty). The report also lists the percentage of Iowa youth who exhibit various at-risk behaviors, such as frequent fighting, alcohol use, depression, and tobacco use, and patterns of co-occurrence among at-risk behaviors, and discusses the relationship between deficits and at-risk behavior. The dynamics of prevention, the exercise of prosocial behaviors, strategies for improvement in community services for children and youth, and recommendations for families, for educators, for youth organizations, and for youth themselves, are also addressed in a tabular format. A community Strengths Checklist suggests how families, schools, community organizations, and teenagers can contribute to positive youth development. (MDM)

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POSITIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

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A Profile of Iowa Youth

Iowa Department of Education
February, 1995

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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report is a summary of the major findings of the 1993 Iowa Youth Survey. The statewide youth survey utilized a 121-item questionaire developed by the Iowa Department of Education and Search Institute of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

The report is a composite look at the 14,400 Iowa students in grades 6-12 in 72 school districts. The Iowa Youth Survey results are very representative of Iowa youth, schools, and communities. Findings about grade trends, gender differences, and the prevalence of assets, deficits, and at-risk behaviors, are very likely applicable to most Iowa communities.

The Iowa Youth Survey was totally funded by federal Drug-Free Schools and Communities dollars. The survey was designed to provide useful planning and evaluation data for local programs.

A complete report on the findings of the 1993 Iowa Youth Survey is available upon request. For more information about the study, or to request a free copy of the full report, please contact:

Substance Education Program
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ASSETS

Assets are factors which promote positive development of children and youth. The assets can be *"external"* to the child or youth, such as positive relationships within families, positive behaviors of friends, positive school environments, and developmentally appropriate activities within the community. Other assets can be *"internal"* to the child or youth, such as his or her values, aspirations, and skills.

The assets selected for this study are listed below. Some assets are very common among Iowa youth, such as caring about people's feelings, educational aspiration, and achievement motivation. Other assets, positive school climate and friends who value helping others, are surprisingly uncommon.

The average Iowa student has only nine of the 17 external assets and five of the eight internal assets. As youth get older and face tougher choices, the number of assets tends to decrease in the key areas of parental standards, parents as social resources, and valuing sexual restraint as teenagers.

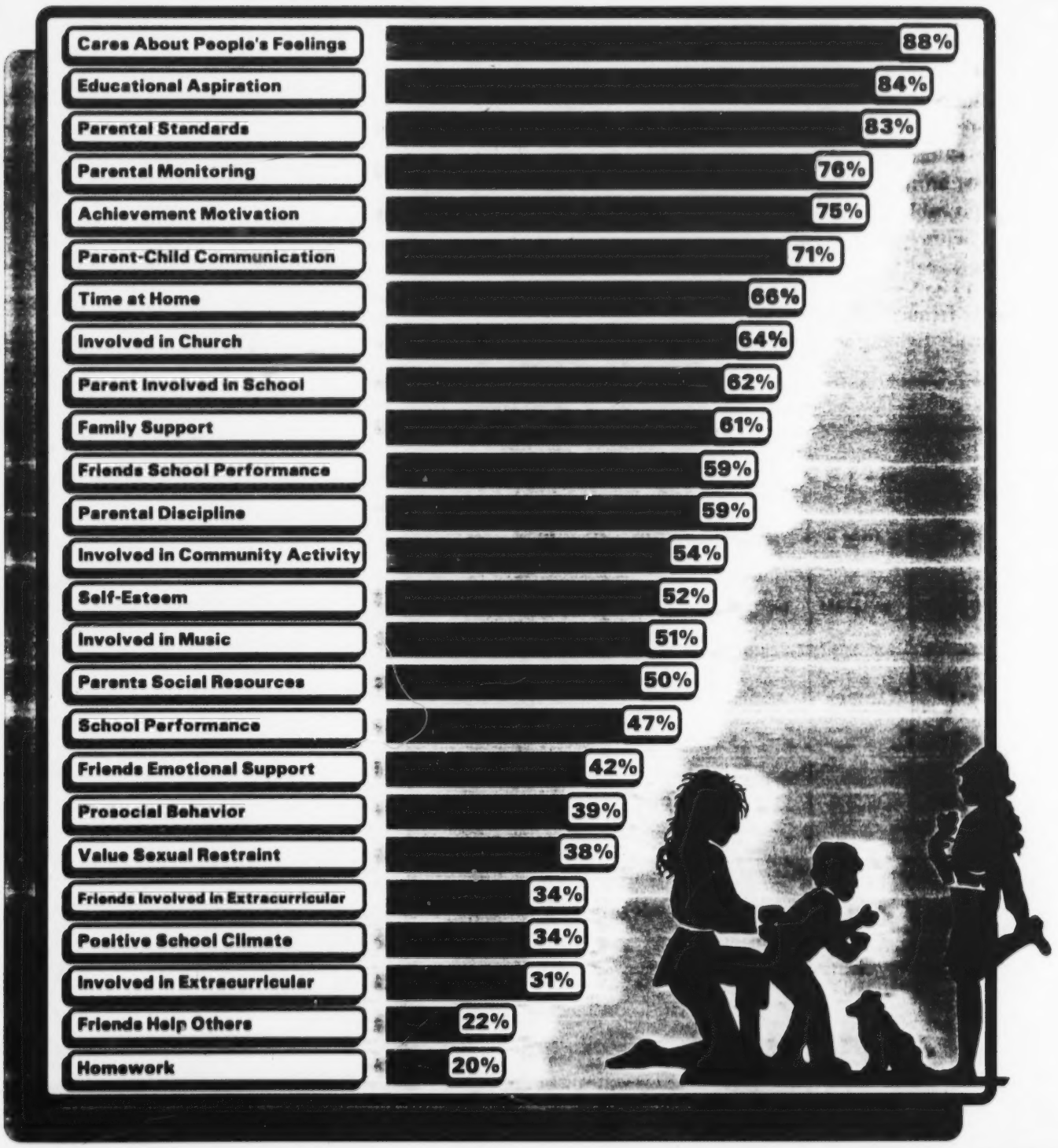
EXTERNAL ASSETS

1. Family Support
2. Parent (s) as Social Resources
3. Parent and Child Communications
4. Parent Involvement in School
5. Positive School Climate
6. Parental Standards
7. Parental Discipline
8. Parental Monitoring
9. Time at Home
10. Friends Do Well in School
11. Friends Provide Emotional Support
12. Friends Help Others
13. Friends Involved in Extracurricular Activities
14. Involved in Music
15. Involved in School Extracurricular Activities
16. Involved in Community Activity
17. Involved in Church or Synagogue

INTERNAL ASSETS

1. Achievement Motivation
2. Educational Aspiration
3. School Performance
4. Homework
5. Cares About People's Feelings
6. Values Sexual Restraint
7. Self-Esteem
8. Prosocial Behavior

Percentages Of Iowa Youth With Each Asset



DEFICITS

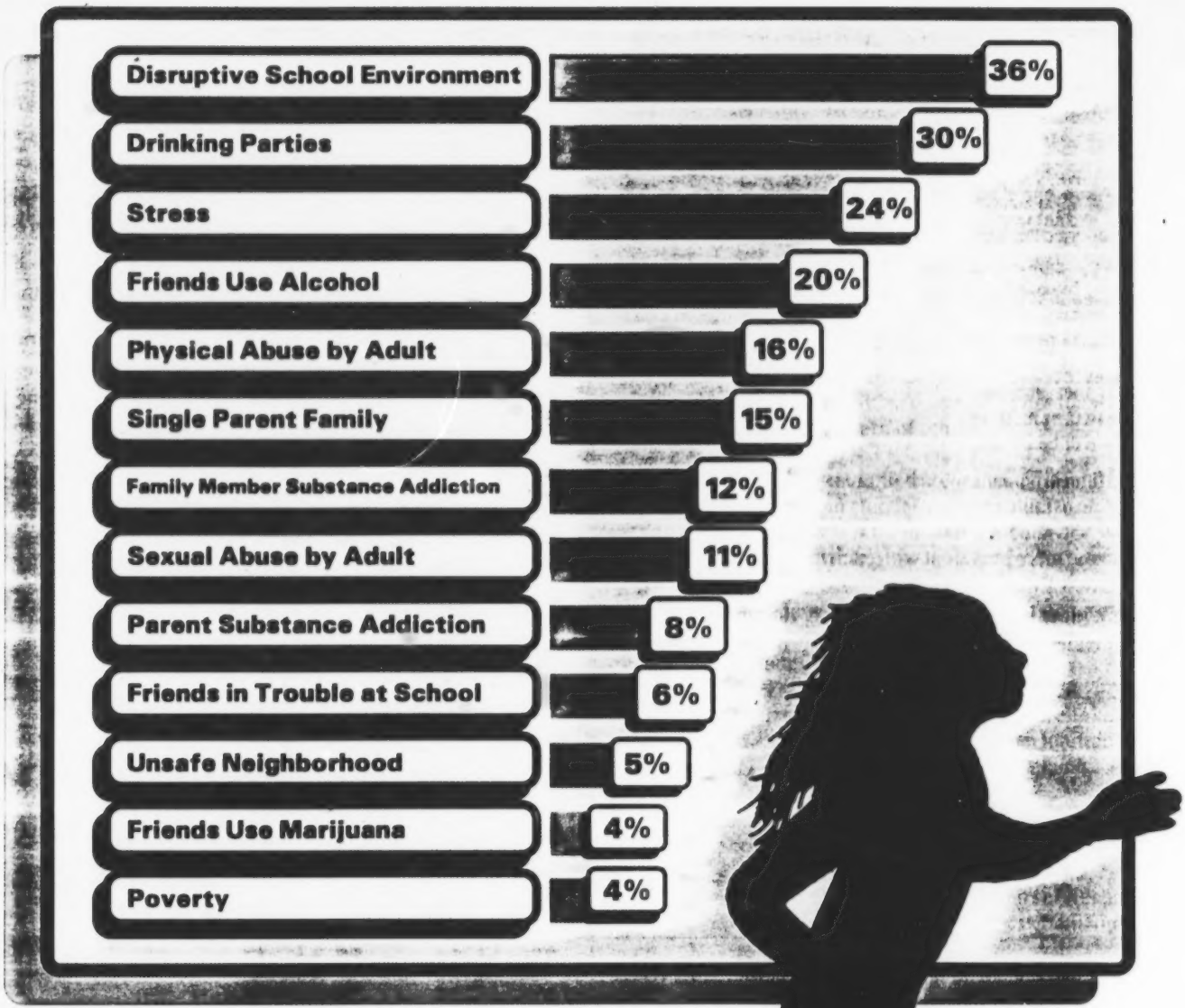
Deficits are factors which inhibit healthy development. Many deficits directly limit a youth's access to external assets. Some deficits block the development of internal assets such as educational aspiration. Some deficits seem to make it easier to choose unhealthy or high-risk behaviors. Deficits are liabilities which appear to make harm more probable. The deficits selected for the survey are listed below.

The 13 deficits are associated with risky behaviors, such as frequent alcohol use, attempted suicide, and physically fighting someone from anger. Among the total youth sample, 25 percent reported no deficits, 28 percent reported one deficit, 20 percent reported two deficits, and 27 percent reported three or more deficits.

Three deficits which markedly increase in prevalence as students get older are drinking parties, stress, and friends who drink alcohol. Physical and sexual abuse also appear to increase in prevalence with an increase in age. Deficit factors that do not appear to vary as a function of age are parent substance addiction, unsafe neighborhood, poverty, and the single parent family.

DEFICITS
1. Disruptive School Environment
2. Unsafe Neighborhood
3. Single Parent Family
4. Poverty
5. Physical Abuse by an Adult
6. Sexual Abuse by an Adult
7. Family Member Substance Addiction
8. Parent Substance Addiction
9. Attendance at Drinking Parties
10. Stress
11. Friends Use Alcohol
12. Friends Get in Trouble at School
13. Friends Use Marijuana

Percentages Of Iowa Youth With Each Deficit



AT-RISK BEHAVIOR

At-risk behaviors are actions that limit or endanger the psychological, physical, or economic well-being of adolescents. The Iowa Youth Survey included seven substance risk behaviors and five other risk behaviors.

Approximately 38 percent of the total youth sample reported that they did not engage in any at-risk behaviors. Twenty percent of sixth grade, and 53 percent of the 12th grade students, reported that they engaged in two, or more, of the 12 at-risk behaviors.

SUBSTANCE-RISK BEHAVIORS

1. Passenger With Substance Using Driver
2. Driving After Using Alcohol / Drugs
3. Frequent Alcohol Use
4. Binge Drinking
5. Daily Cigarette Use
6. Frequent Smokeless Tobacco Use
7. Frequent Use Of Illicit Drugs

OTHER-RISK BEHAVIORS

8. Physicall Fighting From Anger
9. Depression
10. Attempted Suicide
11. Extortion By Weapon Use, Force, or Violence
12. Gambling

Ten of the at-risk behaviors became more prevalent with each increase in age. The at-risk behaviors that increased the most dramat-ically as students got older included binge drinking, riding with a drunk driver, cigarette smoking, and frequent drinking. Clearly, the greatest number of at-risk behaviors among Iowa youth involved alcohol. No attempt was made in this study to assess the prevalence of sexual behaviors.

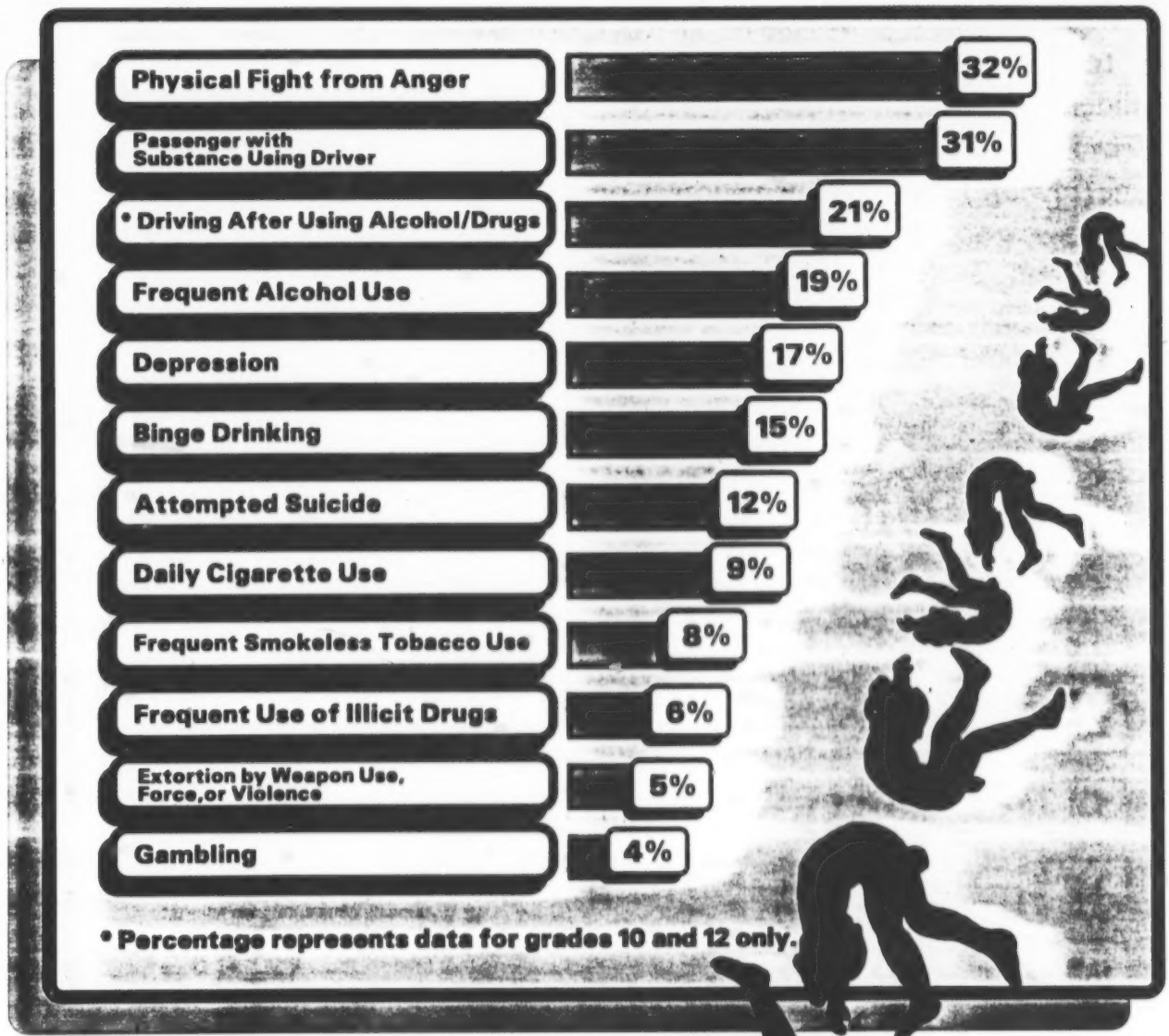
The table at the bottom of this page, illustrates the patterns of co-occurence among at-risk behaviors. For example, 19 percent of the youth were frequent alcohol users. Among the frequent alcohol user group, 34 percent were daily cigarette users, 57 percent were drunk drivers, and 48 percent beat up someone from anger. The patterns of the co-occurence table indicates the youth seldom engage in only one at-risk behavior.

The fact that youth engage in one or more of the at-risk behaviors does not guarantee negative, long-term consequences. However, prevention of the at-risk behaviors appear to be the rational approach to long-term health and well-being.

Patterns Of Co-Occurence Among At-Risk Behaviors

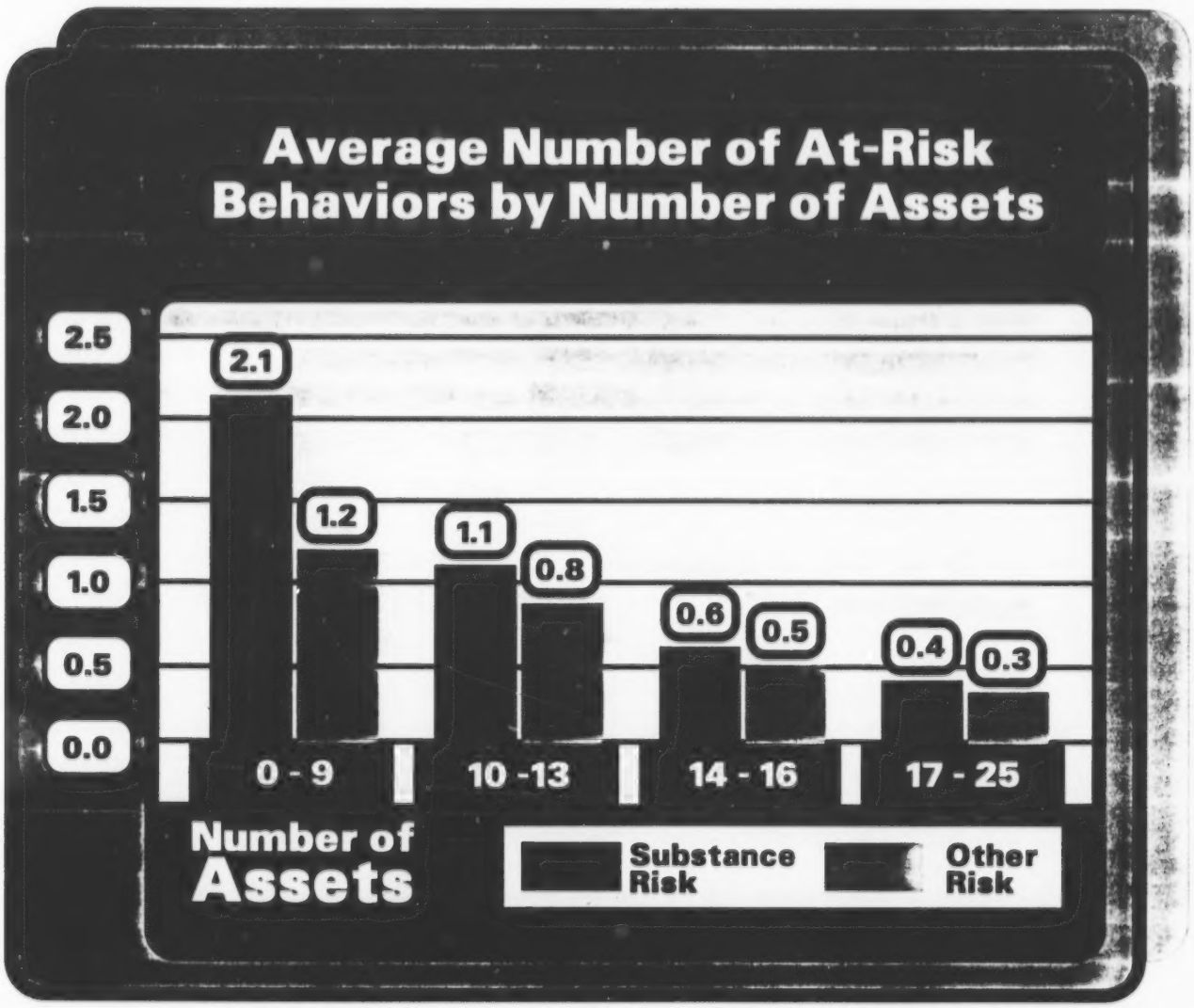
IF AT RISK IN THIS AREA:	Percentage Of Risk In Other Related Areas:									
	FREQUENT ALCOHOL	BINGE DRINKING	DAILY CIGARETTES	FREQUENT DRUGS	DRUNK DRIVING	DEPRESSION	ATTEMPT SUICIDE	EXTORTION	BEAT UP	GAMBLING
FREQUENT ALCOHOL	-	66	34	23	57	25	24	13	48	12
BINGE DRINKING	82	-	36	27	63	27	28	17	53	14
DAILY CIGARETTE	72	62	-	38	55	34	35	17	55	12
FREQUENT ILLICIT DRUGS	74	68	56	-	66	34	40	27	59	20
DRUNK DRIVING	77	70	35	29	-	26	25	16	49	14
DEPRESSION	29	25	18	12	30	-	31	10	43	6
ATTEMPTED SUICIDE	39	37	28	22	38	46	-	16	53	10
EXTORTION	49	49	29	32	50	30	36	-	83	27
BEAT UP SOMEONE	29	25	15	11	31	22	19	13	-	8
GAMBLING	61	56	30	33	52	28	31	37	69	-

Percentages Of Iowa Youth With Each At-Risk Behavior



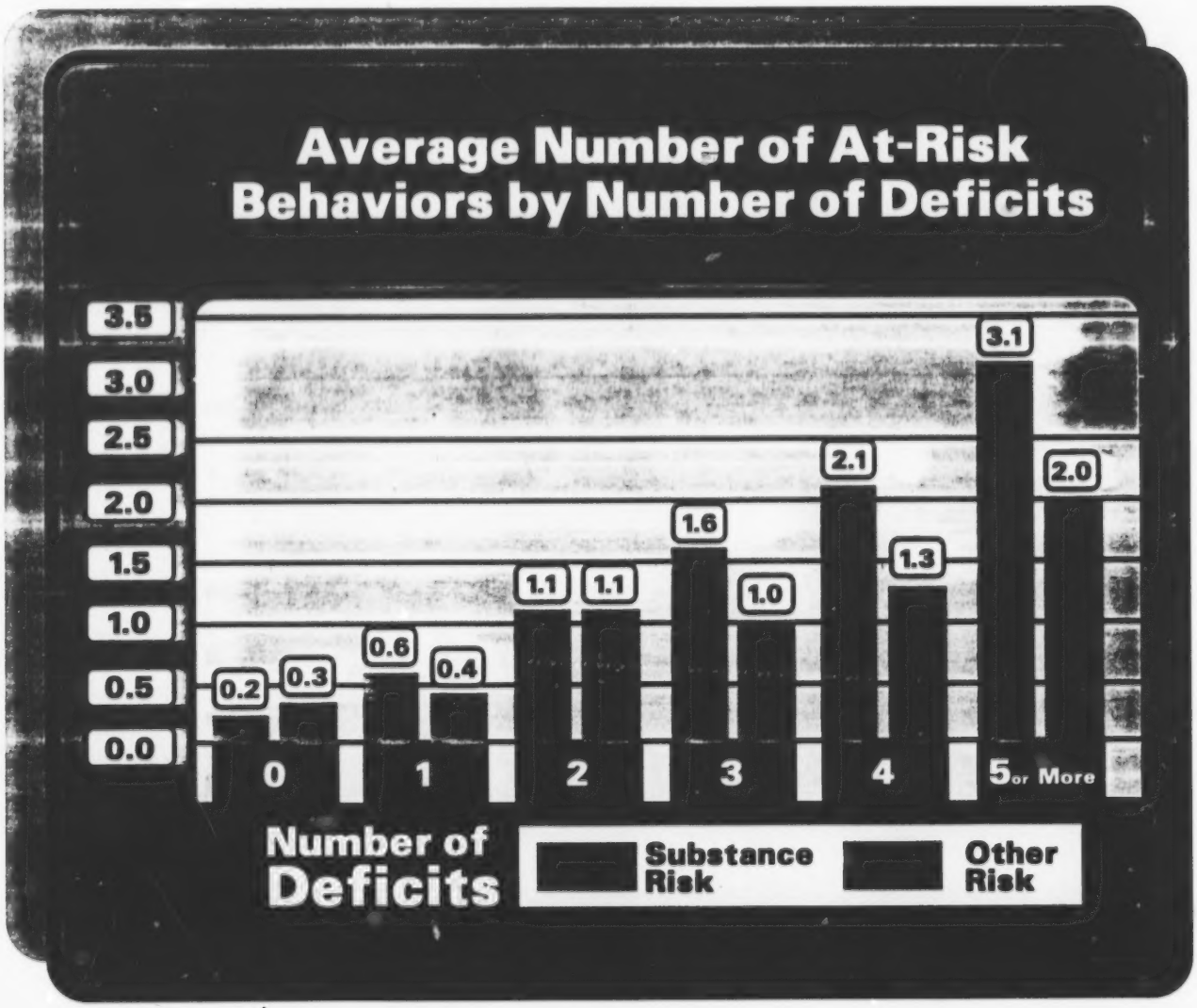
THE DYNAMICS

The 13 deficits and 25 assets, as measured in the survey, were strongly related to the 12 at-risk behaviors. The more assets a student had, the less likely it was the student would be involved in at-risk behaviors. For example, a youth having nine *(or fewer)* assets was likely to be involved in two *(or more)* substance-risk behaviors and one *(or more)* other risk behaviors. Conversely, a youth having 14 *(or more)* assets



OF PREVENTION

was unlikely to be involved in any substance-risk behaviors or any other risk behaviors. A student having five *(or more)* deficits was likely to be involved in three *(or more)* substance-risk behaviors and two *(or more)* other risk behaviors. However, a student who had two *(or fewer)* deficits was likely to be involved in less than one substance-risk behavior and one other risk behaviors.

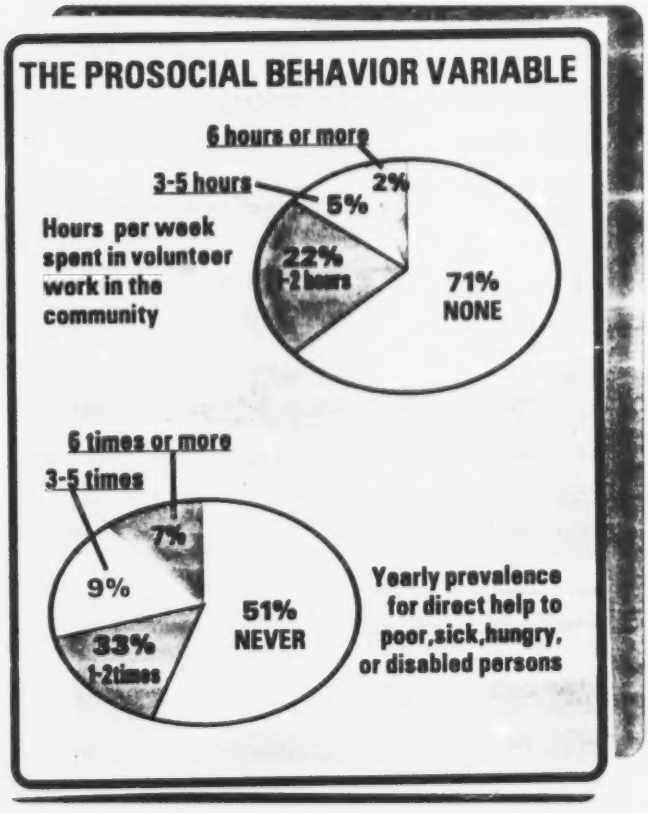


PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

Prosocial behaviors are actions taken to promote the health and welfare of others. The concept of prosocial behaviors covers a wide range of actions, such as helping people in distress, working to correct injustices or inequalities, or donating time and energy to service organizations. The promotion of prosocial behavior is considered to be an important strategy to prevent antisocial or health compromising behavior.

Two helping behavior questions were combined to establish a prosocial behavior variable. Students exhibited prosocial behavior if they had spent time doing volunteer work in their communities AND they had provided direct help to needy persons.

Thirty-nine percent of the total Iowa youth sample demonstrated the prosocial behavior variable. However, the prevalence of prosocial behavior decreased from 47 percent of sixth grade students to 35 percent of 12th grade students.



The 1993 Iowa Youth Survey results indicate that students who had fourteen or more assets were very unlikely to engage in substance-risk or other risk behaviors. The results also indicate that students with two or fewer deficits were also very unlikely to engage in the at-risk behaviors. Fourteen or more assets, two or fewer deficits, one or no substance risk behaviors, and one or no other risk behaviors, appear to be useful standards for local planning and evaluation efforts. The challenge to each Iowa community is to increase the percent of their students in each grade level who meet the standards represented in the table.

Percent of Iowa Grade-Level Samples Meeting Standards

14 OR MORE ASSETS	65%	51%	45%	44%	50%
2 OR FEWER DEFICITS	88%	77%	66%	63%	73%
1 OR NO SUBSTANCE RISK-BEHAVIOR	96%	87%	70%	56%	78%
1 OR NO OTHER RISK-BEHAVIOR	88%	83%	81%	85%	84%

STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVEMENT

The findings of the 1993 Iowa Youth Survey strongly support a three-pronged approach with all children and youth in a community. They include a community-wide effort to concurrently:

- **Foster the development of assets within all children and youth.**
- **Coordinate efforts to reduce or eliminate the deficits in the lives of children and youth.**
- **Provide information and treatment services for children, youth, and families, who are enmeshed in at-risk behaviors.**

Every community faces a large challenge to assure the positive development of each child and youth. Several sectors of the community will need to make extraordinary commitments to their children and adolescents. Government, business, schools, families, service organizations, law enforcement, youth-serving organizations, and religious institutions, will need to implement integrated and complementary strategies for positive youth development. Young people will also need to become more actively invol-ved in the implementation of the strategies.

What follows are 33 recommendations for families, educators, youth-serving organizations, and the youth themselves. The recommendations support the three-pronged approach to positive youth development.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FAMILIES

- ☑ Place high priority on giving frequent and sincere expressions of love, care and support. Avoid the common tendency to assume that adolescents are less in need of such expressions than are younger children.
- ☑ Set clear rules and limits. Negotiate with children reasonable consequences and consistently reward positive behavior.
- ☑ Encourage involvement in structured youth activities, especially those that develop assets.
- ☑ Eliminate attendance at drinking parties and band together with other parents to prevent their occurrence.
- ☑ Model non-use of substances when operating motor vehicles.
- ☑ Learn to recognize signs of such at-risk behaviors as substance abuse, depression, and violence or aggression.
- ☑ Know where to get help.
- ☑ Make "family helping" projects a priority, in which parents and children together give help to others in need.
- ☑ Help children to learn friendship-making and conflict-resolution skills.
- ☑ Encourage and reward achievement motivation, post-high school educational aspirations and homework.
- ☑ Minimize exposure to violence and substance abuse through television, films, and other mass media forms.
- ☑ Clearly state the family's guidelines and expectations regarding the child's non-use of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.
- ☑ Emphasize the development of positive values, including pro-social values and values of behavioral restraint.
- ☑ Provide support to schools and community youth-serving organizations as they attempt to promote assets and health enhancing behaviors among youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR EDUCATORS

- ☑ Personalize schools so that each and every student feels cared for, supported and important.
- ☑ Enhance social competencies, including friendship-making skills, caring skills, assertiveness skills, and resistance skills.
- ☑ Emphasize the development of positive values, particularly those that build a sense of personal responsibility for the welfare of others.
- ☑ Offer quality prevention programming in multiple areas of risk, including alcohol, tobacco, illicit drugs, suicide, depression, violent and abusive behavior, sexuality, and vehicle safety.
- ☑ Enhance academic effectiveness to ensure that students in all income levels gain academic motivation and competence.
- ☑ Emphasize service learning programs, seeking to provide all students with helping opportunities and personal reflection on the meaning of helping.
- ☑ Provide strong support services for youth who are experiencing deficits.
- ☑ Provide effective early intervention services for youth who have become involved in at-risk behaviors.
- ☑ Encourage school personnel to work in partnership with families to promote assets within all children and youth.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS

- ☑ **Redesign and expand some programing for middle school and high school students to more effectively promote assets and build resiliency.**
- ☑ **Expand opportunities for youth to interact with adult mentors and social resources.**
- ☑ **Provide and/or advocate for quality day care and after school care.**
- ☑ **Equip parents with parenting skills, particularly in the areas of support-giving, control, and values formation.**
- ☑ **Involve youth in helping projects.**
- ☑ **Plan programs to address multiple at-risk behaviors.**
- ☑ **Provide strong support services for youth who are experiencing deficits.**

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUTH THEMSELVES

The findings of this study and several other studies clearly describe many of the positive and negative influences that friends and peer groups can exert on an individual youth's behavior. It is critically important for more youth to focus their emotional energy, problem-solving talents, and altruism to help themselves and children.

The following are major challenges to youth:

- ☑ **Change local norms regarding the co-occurring behaviors of frequent alcohol use, binge drinking, drunk driving, riding with alcohol/drug-impaired drivers and participating in drinking parties. Those are normative behaviors established by local peer groups. Such peer group norms can be most effectively changed by the leaders of peer groups themselves.**
- ☑ **Establish a "zero tolerance for violence" norm within the peer groups and the school. The survey found a high prevalence of physical fights from anger, violent acts related to substance use, the use of a weapon, force or threats to get money or things from someone, and frequent disruptions of the school environment.**
- ☑ **Act as early intervention agents. The survey found a high number of youth who are in great danger due to their substance use, depression, violent behavior, and/or the physical/sexual abuse they are receiving. The data suggest that the troubled youth will most likely first turn to a peer/friend for information and help. The act of hearing the request for help is the first step in the intervention process. The peer/friend must take the second step to encourage the troubled youth to immediately seek help from competent adults.**
- ☑ **Reinforce each peer's assets. Youth can find several ways to encourage others to do well in school, to become involved in extracurricular and pro-social activities, and to refrain from or avoid at-risk behaviors.**

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS CHECKLIST*

A community-wide effort to accomplish positive youth development requires current information. Use this checklist to rate strengths of your community from your perspective. Check mark only those characteristics that you feel are strengths. Compare your perceptions with other people and decide what you can collectively do to make your community a better place for children and youth.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

How Families Can Contribute

_____ ● Most young people in the community experience positive and supportive family life.

_____ ● Most young people have positive relationships and communicate well with their parents.

_____ ● Most parents in the community monitor teenagers' activities, express concern, and provide discipline.

How Schools Can Contribute

_____ ● Teachers care about and encourage students.

_____ ● Students try hard in school, care about school, and want to continue their education beyond high school.

_____ ● Students receive support and involvement from parents in school-related activities.

How Communiy Organizations Can Contribute

_____ ● Churches and synagogues offer programs that actively involve young people in their services.

_____ ● Extracurricular activities and community youth organizations involve most teenagers in some structured, planned activities at least two hours every week.

_____ ● Adults (*other than parents*) are available to young people for serious conversations on important issues (*for example, through programs such as mentoring*).

How Teenagers Can Contribute

_____ ● Most teenagers avoid risky behavior such as skipping school, drinking alcohol frequently, using other drugs, or attending drinking parties.

_____ ● Most teenagers don't place excessive emphasis on having lots of money, having lots of fun, or being popular.

_____ ● Most young people spend time volunteering to help others.

_____ ● Most teenagers think it's important to help other people, reduce hunger and poverty and make the world a better place to live.

_____ ● Most young people have responsible values such as valuing sexual abstinence, not drinking and driving, and not riding with drunk drivers.

**Quoted from Healthy Communities, Healthy Youth, Search Institute, Minneapolis, Minnesota, 1992, page 14*

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